

**PACIFIC GATEWAY CENTER**

Pacific Gateway Center  
83 North King Street  
Honolulu Hi 96817

April 8, 2010

The Honorable Nestor Garcia, Chair  
and Members of the Budget Committee  
Honolulu City Council  
530 South King Street, Room 202  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813  
Fax: 527-6910

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C & C OF HONOLULU  
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Dear Chair Garcia and Councilmembers:

Re: Executive Budget Bill 15 CD1

I urge you to maintain the Mayor's Office of Economic Development. Please do not enact budget cuts for such unique departments. OED is important to the ethnic communities that we serve. Refugees, immigrants and low-income communities have no other means to perpetuate their culture and pass on certain important aspects of their culture to the younger generation other than through projects funded by OED.

OED has assisted us in holding ethnic festivals such as the New Year Water Festival, the Floating Lantern Festival, the Fish Releasing Festival over the past several years. These are vital to the people whose ancestry comes from Southeast Asia. The festivals were attended by at least 300 to 500 people at each event bringing together generations through cultural settings. Without OED's support we wouldn't be able to host such events.

The Pacific Gateway Center (PGC) is a 501(c)(3) private non-profit corporation established in 1973 in response to the heavy influx of Asian and Pacific Island immigrants and refugees to the state of Hawai'i. Our mission, "to empower Hawai'i's low-income residents, immigrants and refugees to achieve self-sufficiency through skill-building and access to opportunities while respecting cultural heritages." Assisting our community to perpetuate and preserve their culture is an important component of our mission. Each year PGC serves approximately 6000 people through the core services of social services, employment training and placement, economic development and community building.

OED provides resources and supports projects targeted at the local Oahu community. No other entity provides this service or resource, not even the State. OED enhances the visitor industry in addition to assisting the ethnic communities. OED should be provided an increase in their budget. Other counties have made their equivalent department of OED the cornerstone of their revenue generation efforts. Instead at the City and County of Honolulu,

the Bill 15 CD1 plans to eliminate the department. Given the economic challenges faced by our community and the island of Oahu, OED has managed to leverage its very modest budget to fund events and projects that have enriched the social and economic well being of our county. We urge you to maintain the Mayors Office of Economic Development.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

Sincerely,



Tin Myaing Thein, Ph.D.  
Executive Director.